



NPIC/D-366-77

AUG 23 1977

MEMORANDUM FOR: Director of Central Intelligence

FROM : John J. Hicks
Director, National Photographic Interpretation Center

SUBJECT : Proposing a US Initiative to Establish a United Nations
Aerial Reconnaissance Survey Capability

1. Earlier this month you received from Robert M. Ratner, Acting President of the United Nations Association of the USA, a copy of a report issued by UNA's Policy Panel on International Disaster Relief. Among other things, the report recommends (1) that the U.S. Government apply its resources to develop earth satellite sensing capabilities useful for disaster preparedness and relief, and (2) that the U.S. Government consider providing high-altitude reconnaissance planes and the facilities for film processing for like purposes. The DDI is staffing for you comments and a proposed reply to Mr. Ratner, but I wish to make the following specific proposal directly to you:

That the U.S. Government initiate a proposal for the development and operation of a United Nations owned aerial survey capability based on a system like the U-2, including film processing and exploitation services.

2. I have been considering for some time making such a proposal for reasons given in the following paragraphs. Frankly, I had only progressed as far as drafting some of the following paragraphs when the UNA report proposal came to my attention. Obviously, the U.S. Government should, before publicizing such a proposal, carefully consider the policy aspects and possible costs to the U.S. I suggest to you that the Department of State would be the most appropriate agency to do so in coordination with other agencies such as AID, Defense, NASA and CIA. I am not trying to pass the buck -- I simply feel that such a proposal should not be managed by an intelligence officer or agency. Besides, if it becomes a U.S. initiative, State Department or AID should follow it through to its conclusion. In any case, NPIC stands ready to assist by providing information, advice, and other help.

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3. We know that high altitude imagery reconnaissance systems have the potential for contributing useful information to a wide range of civil purposes throughout the world. We also know that such systems are expensive to develop and to operate, and that productive extraction of information from the results is costly in manpower and equipment. We also know that many governments are fearful of and hostile to the idea of foreign governmental and commercial interests acquiring and exploiting aerial coverage of national territory. I believe that this proposal has merit for reconciling these factors, and advancing U.S. policy concerns, and contributing to world social and economic progress.

4. My concept is that the United Nations would establish a component under its management and control which would operate and maintain a small number of U-2 or like photographic aircraft. This UN aerial survey component would also include film processing, photointerpretation, and cartographic units capable of developing the film, extracting the necessary information from the film, and translating the information into report forms responsive to the need. In this concept, the United Nations would also establish a committee or board of directors who would receive, approve and give priorities to UN member nations' requests for the services of the aerial survey component.

5. I see the following advantages to such an arrangement:

a. The costs would be contributed to and shared by the UN member countries. This would mean that the U.S. probably would bear a large proportion of the costs initially, but with successes over time other nations could be persuaded to increase their contributions. Also, the costs could be increasingly offset by charging customer nations for services.

b. Under UN control, customer nations would be assured that foreign governmental and commercial interests would not have access to the products without the consent of the customer nation concerned.

c. U.S. agencies such as the Agency for International Development, providing U.S. development support to selected foreign nations, would be able to give those nations an advantage in initiating and shaping their requests for and their applications of, aerial survey services.

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d. U.S. commercial interests are capable of, and would be competitive in, bidding to provide the system and to assist other nations to use the aerial survey products.

e. The availability of photography with the quality and other characteristics of the U-2 system would enable us to circumvent or put aside some of the difficult U.S. policy issues concerning future unclassified U.S. space systems.

f. The U-2 or a like system is more appropriate to the aerial survey needs of most countries than satellite systems. The U-2 can gain complete cloud free coverage of a small nation or selected part of a nation in a short period of time, the time of coverage can be coordinated easily with clear weather periods, and the scale of the photography is most suitable for those kinds of needs.

[Redacted Signature]

JOHN J. HICKS

cc: DDS&T
DDI
State Department/INR (Mr. William Deary)
AID
NASA

[Redacted Box]

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ROUTING AND RECORD SHEET

SUBJECT: (Optional) Proposing a US Initiative to Establish a United Nations Aerial Reconnaissance Survey Capability

FROM: Director, NPIC
Room 6N100 -

EXTENSION

NO. NPIC/D-366-77

DATE 23 August 1977

TO: (Officer designation, room number, and building)

DATE

OFFICER'S INITIALS

COMMENTS (Number each comment to show from whom to whom. Draw a line across column after each comment.)

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7E12 - Headquarters

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